the fifth meeting of the India-China Joint Working Group (JWG) held in Beijing on October 28-29, 1992, the two sides continued their discussions aimed at arriving at a mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question as well as discussions on measures to ensure peace and stability in the areas along the Line of Actual Control. The positive experience of implementing confidence building measures arrived at during previous meetings of the JWG was reviewed. It was agreed in principle that further points would be opened to border trade, with details to be worked out in future consultations.

(b) Further steps to ensure peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control, suggested by both sides at this meeting of JWG, will continue to be discussed.

Shortage of Passport Books

625. SHRI VITHALBHAI M. PATEL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that there is an acute shortage of passport books in different Regional Passport Offices;

(b) how many applications are pending for issue of passports in different Regional Passport Offices in the country; and

(c) what steps Government are going to take to provide required number of passport books to the Regional Passport Offices and by what time ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) to (c) There has been a shortage of passport booklets primarily because of a sudden and steep increase in the number of passport applications received in 1991 and early 1992. There are approximately 11,80,000 applications pending in the regional and other passport offices in the country. The Government has taken urgent steps to arrange for an increase in the supply of passport booklets and is monitoring the situation closely.

Procedure for issue of Visa for different Protectorates

626. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA :
SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any special procedure for issue of visas to Indians by different countries to permit visits or stay in different countries to permit visits or stay in different protectorates, such as the Re-Union Island under France;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard, indicating the understanding or bilateral agreements, if any, in this regard; and

(c) whether any special additional fees are charged besides the normal Visa fees chargeable by the Mission for Visa facilities for such protectorates, and if so, the details in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) to (c) Necessary information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Indian staying in erstwhile USSR

627. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR :

SHRI V. RAJESHWAR RAO :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) what is the number of Indians in the various Republics which constituted the erstwhile U.S.S.R.;

(b) whether Government have ascertained the difficulties faced by them; and

(c) if so, what steps are being taken to mitigate hardships ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) The estimated number of Indians in various Republics, excluding Indian Embassies staff,